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MASERU, LESOTHO

Sunday, 5 October 2025

Lesotho Tribune

www.lesothotribune.co.ls

Information Liberates

ISSN 2453-5419



9 772453 541003 >

VOL 5, ISSUE 5

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RFP Backbenchers Forced to Oppose Mofomobe Motion

...more than half of RFP MPs are RSA citizens

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

A political master stroke has just been thrown in the National Assembly by Hon. Machesetsa Mofomobe, by tabling a motion demanding that MPs holding South African citizenship or residency status publicly declare it. What appears on the surface as a technical matter of accountability has exploded into a test of loyalty, sovereignty, and party discipline, placing the ruling Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) at the center of a controversy it would rather avoid. The motion, lodged on October 1, calls on every member of the National Assembly to submit a written declaration if they possess South African identity documents, passports, or permanent resident permits. It further requires the Speaker or



Clerk to publish those declarations in the interest of transparency and the protection of Lesotho's sovereignty. The RFP Dilemma For RFP, which swept to power on a reformist ticket in 2022, the motion cuts uncom-

fortably close to home. A backbencher who spoke to Lesotho Tribune under condition of anonymity disclosed that party leaders have been quietly rallying MPs to oppose the motion. "We have been told to

close ranks and vote against it," the MP said. "But privately many of us admit it touches a real issue." The same MP claimed that as many as 23 RFP legislators hold South African IDs. If

Continues in Page 3

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true, that would represent nearly half the party's caucus. Lesotho Tribune could not independently verify the number, and official comment from the RFP was not forthcoming. Attempts to reach the party's spokesperson went unanswered.

Mofomobe's Crusade Hon. Mofomobe, a seasoned political maverick, insists the motion is about more than paperwork. Speaking to Lesotho Tribune, he accused elements within Lesotho's leadership of harboring divided loyalties.

"Lesotho is led by people who hate this country and want to see us becoming part of South Africa," Mofomobe said. "This motion will expose how deeply infiltrated our politics is by South African agents."

His words cut directly into a long-running national anxiety: the porousness of the border with South Africa, the ease with which Basotho obtain South African documents, and the creeping suspicion that Lesotho's sovereignty is being quietly hollowed out. A History of Double

Lives

The issue of dual identity is not new. For decades, many Basotho, both ordinary citizens and politicians, have sought South African documents for convenience, access to jobs, and mobility. What has rarely been confronted, however, is the political cost when those same documents are held by lawmakers entrusted with shaping Lesotho's future.

Lesotho's constitution does not permit dual citizenship for adults, creating a legal grey zone in which leaders can openly or covertly benefit from South African status without facing scrutiny. Previous parliaments have skirted around the question, but Mofomobe's motion drags it back into the spotlight. A Test of Sovereignty At its heart, the debate is less about passports and more about sovereignty. Can a legislator sworn to defend Lesotho also hold the papers of another state? Does the possession of a South African ID amount to divided allegiance, or is it simply a pragmatic reality of life in the Mountain Kingdom where proximity to South Africa shapes almost every economic and social dynamic?

For Mofomobe, the answer is clear. The infiltration of foreign influence has already compromised national decision-making. For RFP, however, the motion represents a political landmine. If dozens of its MPs are exposed as South African document holders, the party risks accusations of hypocrisy, illegitimacy, and betrayal of national interest.

Political Fallout

Analysts warn that whatever the outcome of the vote, the damage is already done. By raising the issue in Parliament, Mofomobe has forced the RFP into a defensive crouch. If the motion fails, it will be seen as evidence of the ruling party shielding compromised MPs. If it passes, it could trigger a crisis of legitimacy with implications far beyond Parliament. Some even suggest that the revelation of widespread dual status among MPs could spark public anger and calls for broader constitutional reform. For a government already battling perceptions of elitism and internal fractures, the motion could not have come at a worse time.

The Silence of the Par-

The RFP's refusal to publicly address the allegations only deepens suspicion. Silence in politics often speaks louder than words. The unanswered calls to the party's spokesman leave a vacuum that Mofomobe has filled with incendiary claims about South African "agents" steering Lesotho's destiny.

What remains unclear is whether the RFP leadership intends to confront the issue head-on or simply rely on numbers in Parliament to smother the motion. Either way, the public now watches closely, aware that the debate touches the core of who governs Lesotho and for whose interests.

A Nation Watching As the motion makes its way through the Order Paper, the stakes are undeniable. For Lesotho, this is more than a question of administrative transparency. It is a confrontation with uncomfortable truths about identity, allegiance, and the fragility of sovereignty in a small state overshadowed by a giant neighbor.

Hon. Mofomobe has forced the country to ask: Who really governs Lesotho?

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Big Legal Battles Ahead, Court of Appeal Opens Second Session

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

The stage is set for another high-stakes legal showdown as the Court of Appeal begins its second session of the year on October 7, 2025. The session will see a total of 50 cases, covering both civil and criminal matters placed before the highest court in the land.

Some of Lesotho's most debatable and widely followed cases have made it onto the roll, promising weeks of heated argument, sharp legal exchanges and decisions that could alter both political and legal landscapes.

Among the cases listed are those involving Leputhela Ntsie, Member of Parliament Thabiso Lekitla, the Prime Minister versus the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and former Lesotho Communications Authority (LCA) boss 'Mamarama Matela.

One of the most dramatic cases is that of Leputhela Ntsie who is challenging his conviction and sentence for murder. Ntsie was first convicted in 2012 by the High Court on two counts of murder. In a curious twist, he vanished during the lunch break

while the judgment was being delivered. The court proceeded in his absence, finding him guilty of killing Habaka Mahao and Souru Masupha in a violent incident at Khorong Ha Tšosane in 2004.

For years, Ntsie lived as



a absconder until he was tracked down and extradited from South Africa in March 2022. On his return, the High Court sentenced him to 20 and 21 years in prison, to run concurrently.

Now, in a bid for freedom, Ntsie has turned to the Court of Appeal, arguing that the conviction was flawed. His case is expected to draw wide attention, not only because of the shocking circumstances of his disappearance years ago, but also because of the families of the victims who have waited over two decades for final closure.

Another headline case is that of Member of Parliament for Mekaling, Thabiso Lekitla, who is appealing his criminal charges against the Crown. Details of the charges involve allegations linked to conduct unbecoming of a sitting MP. Lekitla's case has generated interest because of its political undertones, raising questions about accountability, privilege and how far the law can

reach when it comes to lawmakers.

Legal observers say his appeal will be a test of whether the courts can balance the duties of elected representatives with the demands of justice. Should the court dismiss his appeal, it could have far-reaching consequences on his political career and the balance of power within Parliament.

Perhaps the most politically charged case is the legal battle between the Prime Minister and the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Advocate Hlalefang Motinyane. This case touches the heart of constitutional authority in Lesotho, questioning the limits of executive power against the independence of the prosecuting authority.

At its core, the case will determine whether the Prime Minister overstepped his authority in dealings that interfered with the independence of the DPP's office. The outcome is expected to send ripples through

Lesotho's governance system, as it could either strengthen the independence of the DPP or reinforce executive influence over key legal institutions.

Also on the roll is the highly anticipated case of 'Mamarama Matela, the former Chief Executive Officer of the LCA. Matela is challenging her removal from office in a disagreement that has dragged on for years and attracted significant public attention.

She argues that her dismissal was politically motivated and procedurally unfair. Her case against the LCA is not only about her personal career but also raises questions about governance, accountability and the independence of regulatory institutions in Lesotho.

With the communications sector being vital to both the economy and security of the nation, the court's ruling will be closely watched by business leaders, politicians and ordinary citizens alike.

With 50 cases to be heard, the Court of Appeal is bracing itself for a busy and intense schedule. Both civil disputes and criminal appeals are set to test the strength of the justice system and the patience of litigants who have been waiting for their day in court.

The Court of Appeal remains Lesotho's final legal authority, meaning its decisions are binding and cannot be overturned locally. For many of the parties involved, this session represents their last chance at justice.



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Rogue State Allegations as Opposition Tears Into Matekane

By: Seipati Matobo

Ropposition parties have accused the Revolution for Prosperity (RFP)-led coalition of dragging Lesotho into rogue-state territory. Their charge: the systematic undermining of the Constitution and open defiance of the courts. At a press conference held at the Transformation Resource Centre on Wednesday, Democratic Congress leader and official Leader of the Opposition, Mathibeli Mokhothu, condemned Prime Minister Sam Matekane for unlawfully suspending Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Hlalefang Motinyane and then refusing to obey a Constitutional Court order reinstating her.

“We were shocked by her suspension. Advocate Motinyane challenged it in the Constitutional Court, as she was entitled to under a democratic dispensation. The court ruled her suspension unconstitutional. After losing the case, they locked her office with a heavy padlock. That is wrong. The government must abide by judicial decisions. It is deeply embarrassing when it undermines a court order,” Mokhothu said.

Defiance of the Judiciary
The case has become a flashpoint in Lesotho’s political crisis. The government’s refusal to reinstate Motinyane, even after the



ruling, has been called “executive lawlessness” by watchdog group Section 2. Abuse of Power

Opposition parties also allege that Matekane’s administration has used security agencies as tools of intimidation. Before a planned no-confidence vote in October 2024, the heads of security services warned the opposition not to proceed, reviving fears of military interference in politics. More recently, the police commissioner was accused of requiring the Prime Minister’s clearance for peaceful protests, language Section 2 described as “dictatorship”.

Constitutional Manipulation

Critics charge that the RFP government is cherry-pick-

ing constitutional amendments to entrench its own interests. This piecemeal approach, they argue, mirrors past attempts at executive overreach that courts warned against in 2022. Corruption Claims
Opposition leaders have also pointed to widespread corruption.

- Ballooning costs in the Moshoeshoe I International Airport refurbishment.

- Nepotism in appointments, including diplomatic postings for relatives and allies of ministers.

- M3.4 billion spent without parliamentary approval.

“These are not the hallmarks of a government of integrity,” Mokhothu

added.

Failure of Delivery
Beyond the constitutional crisis, the opposition says the government has failed to provide basic services while crime rates remain alarmingly high.

The Bigger Picture
Matekane’s Revolution for Prosperity swept into power in October 2022 on a wave of optimism. A new party promised a clean break from decades of instability. Two years later, the promise appears to have curdled into a familiar pattern: executive interference, constitutional breaches, and public disillusionment. The DPP standoff is not just a legal battle. It is a test of whether Lesotho is governed by laws or by the will of those in power.

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Kamoli fails to escape the Mahao murder case

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

Former Army Commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli and some of his co-accused in the high-profile murder case of former Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) commander, Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao, have failed in their attempt to be acquitted. The accused, who had applied to be discharged from the case because the prosecution had not presented enough evidence against them, were dealt a blow this week when Justice Charles Hungwe dismissed their application.

The ruling means that Kamoli and the other accused will have to take the stand and defend themselves in the trial that has captured national attention for years.

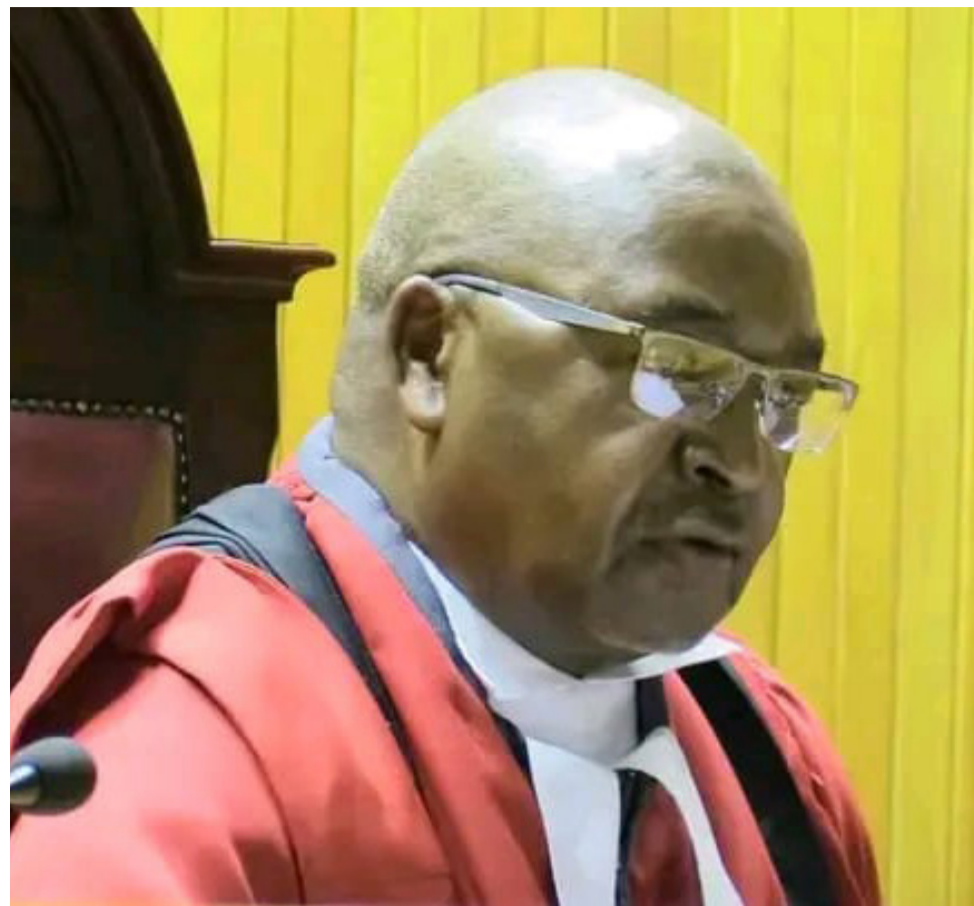
Delivering judgment, Justice Hungwe said the court was satisfied that the prosecution had established a prima facie case, meaning that on the face of it, there is sufficient evidence that requires the accused to respond.

"The court is satisfied that the threshold has been met," Justice Hungwe said.

"There is a case for the accused to answer. Their application for discharge, therefore, fails."

The decision confirms that the trial will proceed, with the accused now expected to enter their defence.

In arguments opposing the



discharge, state prosecutor Advocate Rethabile Setlojoane insisted that the evidence led so far in the trial points directly to the accused's involvement in the killing of Mahao.

He said all the accused knowingly associated themselves with the unlawful operation that led to Mahao's death even though it was disguised as an arrest mission.

According to Setlojoane, Kamoli, who was the army commander at the time, was fully aware of the operation.

"He was the commander when the deceased was killed. He knew about the operation, but did nothing to stop it," he said.

The prosecution further argued that even if Kamoli was not physically present at the scene, he could not be pardoned from responsibility.

"He equally associated himself with the unlawful activity," Setlojoane told the court.

He said the state had successfully presented enough witnesses and evidence to show that each of the accused had a role to play, whether by planning, authorising or carrying out the mission. For that reason, he asked the court to dismiss the application for discharge and order the accused to enter their defence.

The defence lawyers, however, strongly disagreed. They argued that the prosecution's case was weak and that their clients should not be forced to defend themselves when no direct evidence linked them to Mahao's death. Advocate Silas Ratau, representing accused soldier Litekanyo Nyakane, told the court that his client was simply a driver during the operation and had nothing to do with the actual killing.

"There is no evidence upon which the court might convict Nyakane," he said.

"Yes, he was present, but he never participated in the killing of the deceased. He was only driving." Another defence lawyer, Attorney Qhalehang Letsika, also argue that his client, Lekhooa Moepi, had no case to answer.

He said no witnesses had suggested that Moepi was part of any meeting where Mahao's killing was planned.

"There is no evidence that places him at the crime scene where the deceased was killed," Letsika told the court.

According to him, the absence of direct evidence meant that Moepi should have been discharged from the case.

Despite these arguments, Justice Hungwe found that the evidence presented by the prosecution was enough to justify keeping all the accused in the dock. The judge stressed that the purpose of the trial is to weigh all the facts and for that to happen, the accused must give their side of the story under oath.

The decision was a huge setback for the defence which had hoped to have some of the accused freed at this stage. Instead, the court's ruling tightened the noose on Kamoli and his co-accused, making it clear that the murder case against them is far from over.

With the court's ruling, the trial now moves into a new phase, where the accused will be required to present their defence. They may choose to testify themselves, call witnesses or both.

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ESG Lens

Is Lesotho's Insurance Sector Ready for Climate Risk



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Disaster Management Authority, Lesotho Meteorological Services

Lesotho's climate is shifting faster than the country's systems can adapt. Floods that destroy homes in Maputsoe. Droughts that empty the Mohale Dam and cripple smallholder farmers. Violent storms that damage roads and power lines. These are no longer outliers. They are annual events.

The question is whether the insurance sector is keeping pace with this new reality.

Environmental: Climate Adaptation

In theory, insurers should be frontline actors in climate resilience. By pricing risk correctly and rewarding adaptation, they can nudge households and businesses toward climate-smart behaviour. Yet local insurance products remain thin. Flood insurance is rare. Agricultural cover is limited and expensive. When the drought hit in 2023, most small farmers had no safety net. A few initiatives exist. Some micro-insurers, working with development



partners, have piloted weather-indexed crop insurance in Berea and Leribe. But coverage remains low, and payouts have been inconsistent. Without broader adoption, climate shocks will continue to push families into poverty. Governance: Risk Transparency Globally, insurers are adopting climate scenario planning, stress-testing portfolios against rising climate risks. In Lesotho, transparency is patchy. Few insurers publish how they factor climate into risk models. Boards seldom disclose exposure to events like flash floods or prolonged drought.

The Lesotho National Insurance Regulator has also been slow to demand disclosures. Governance experts argue that without regulatory pressure, insurers will underprice climate risk in the short term and collapse under

heavy claims when disaster strikes.

The Missed Opportunity Insurance penetration in Lesotho is among the lowest in the region. Less than 5 percent of households hold any form of cover. Climate risk could be the chance to expand the sector, but only if insurers innovate. Offering affordable drought and flood policies, tying premiums to resilience measures such as water harvesting or stronger building codes, could shift the market.

Instead, the sector has remained cautious. That caution now looks like negligence.

The Bigger Picture Prime Minister Sam Matekane has championed resilience in speeches, but critics argue government has left too much to chance. The Meteorological Services issue warnings, but there is no coordinated

insurance response. Without alignment between policy, insurers, and households, the country remains dangerously exposed. Climate risk is not theoretical. It is here. Unless the insurance sector and government work together, Lesotho will keep rebuilding after each storm instead of preparing for the next one.

Lesotho's Costliest Climate Events in the Last Five Years

- Maputsoe Floods (2023): Hundreds displaced, infrastructure destroyed.

- Mohale Dam Drought (2022–23): Severe water shortages, farmers lost entire harvests.

- Thaba-Tseka Storms (2024): Roads cut off, power outages lasted days.

Source: Disaster Management Authority, Lesotho Meteorological Services



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Kamoli, Soldiers Win Delay in Mahao Murder Trial

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

The long-running trial of nine soldiers, including army boss Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli, who are accused of murdering Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) commander Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao, has once again been postponed.

The defence team, appearing in the High Court this week, successfully asked for more time to prepare their case and to secure witnesses before their clients take the

stand. This request came shortly after the court dismissed an earlier attempt by the accused to be acquitted without entering their defence.

One of the defence lawyers, Advocate Silas Ratau, told the court that the accused soldiers do not want to testify immediately. Instead, they plan to call witnesses to testify on their behalf first. He explained, however, that the intended witnesses were not yet available and without them the defence would not be ready to proceed.

“The accused intend to call witnesses before taking the stand themselves. Unfortunately, those witnesses are not available at the moment,” Ratau said. He argued that forcing the accused to testify without those witnesses would weaken their case



and therefore asked the court for a postponement. Attorney Qhalehang Letsika, also representing some of the accused, supported the request.

He told the court that a delay would give the defence more time to consult thoroughly and prepare a proper defence strategy.

Interestingly, the request for postponement was not opposed by the prosecution.

State prosecutor Advocate Rethabile Setlojoane did not challenge the application, effectively allowing the defence some breathing space.

With no objections before him, the presiding judge agreed to the postponement. The trial will now resume in the New Year, running from January 12 to January 30, 2026.

The decision adds yet another chapter to a case

that has dragged on for years.

Mahao was killed in June 2015 near his home in Mokema in an incident that shocked the nation and drew international criticism.

According to reports, Mahao was ambushed and shot by fellow soldiers who claimed they were carrying out an arrest order. His death sparked outrage and led to a regional commission of inquiry, which later recommended prosecutions. Since then, the case has been in and out of the courts, often delayed by legal battles, procedural applications, and logistical setbacks.

This week's postponement means that the accused, including Kamoli, once considered one of the most powerful men in the army, will spend several more

months waiting to give their side of the story.

The request for postponement comes just after the same accused lost their bid to be acquitted. They had argued that the prosecution had not provided enough evidence to prove their involvement in Mahao's killing.

But High Court judge Justice Charles Hungwe disagreed. In a ruling delivered earlier this week, he said the state had established a prima facie case, meaning that there was enough evidence requiring the accused to answer to the charges.

“The court is satisfied that the threshold has been met,” the judge said in his ruling.

“There is a case for the accused to answer.” That ruling meant the nine soldiers had no choice but to prepare their defence.



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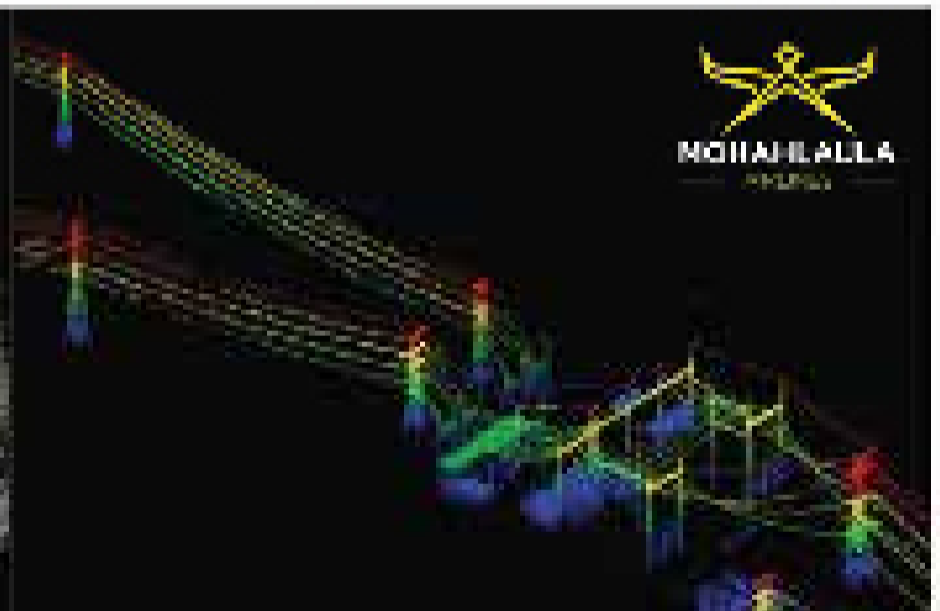
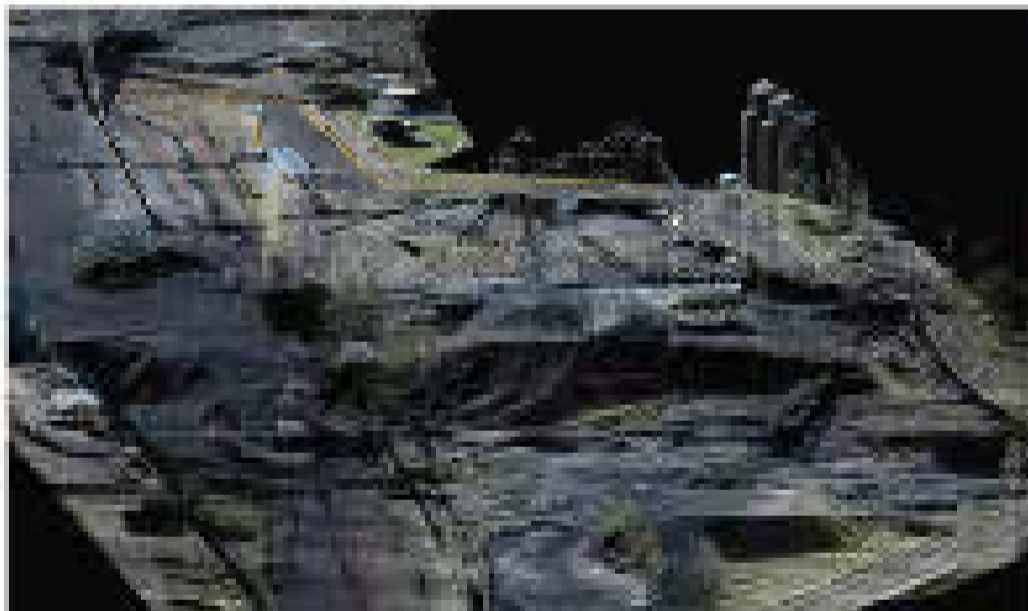




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EDITORIAL

We Could Not Secure You a Future, But We Will Gladly Charge You for Trying to Make One Yourself



15

Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

It is graduation season in Lesotho. The moment is meant to be joyous. Families travel long distances, graduates put on rented gowns, and photographers line up to capture a milestone that comes only once. Yet behind the applause and the photo sessions lies a practice that speaks volumes about how our institutions of higher learning see themselves and see the young people they produce.

Universities and colleges now demand that photographers pay a fee to take pictures at graduation ceremonies. Three hundred here, five hundred there. It sounds small until you consider who is being asked to pay.

Many of these photographers are not outsiders. They are not strangers parachuting in to make



a quick profit. They are graduates themselves or peers of the graduates, people who have turned to the camera because there are no jobs. They are part of the very generation the institutions failed to place in employment. For them, photography is not a side hustle. It is bread and butter. It is school fees. It is rent. To ask them for money before they can work is not policy. It is cruelty.

There is also a deeper insult. The photos taken at graduations are not for the photographers. They are for the families who sacrificed for years to put their children through school. By charging photographers, institutions are not only squeezing the unem-

ployed. They are indirectly charging the same parents who already carried the heavy cost of tuition. Families are paying twice, first to educate and then to celebrate.

This is what makes the practice sickening. It reveals an instinct for petty revenue collection where there should be vision. Instead of asking how to create opportunities for the graduates they produce, institutions busy themselves with policing who holds a camera on the day. Instead of building pathways into the world of work, they close the gates tighter and collect from those struggling outside. The truth is simple. If institutions of higher learning were serious about

their role, they would be forming partnerships with these young photographers. They would be teaching creative entrepreneurship. They would be creating digital labs where skills in photography, editing, and media can be nurtured into sustainable businesses. They would be finding ways to add value, not extract it.

What we are seeing instead is short sightedness dressed up as regulation. It is a small act, but one that exposes the larger decay. Our institutions no longer measure themselves by the futures they create. They measure themselves by the fees they collect.

So here we are, in the season of graduations. The gowns will shine, the speeches will flow, and the photographers will still show up because they have no choice. But the question lingers. What kind of higher learning charges the very people who turn unemployment into survival? What kind of institution produces the jobless, then taxes them for daring to work?

The answer is in front of us. We could not secure you a future, but we will gladly charge you for trying to make one yourself.

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Lesotho Tribune

by:Staff Reporter

As our nation faces an ever-growing financial crisis, the very foundations of our society are under severe threat. At the heart of this chaos is none other than Dr Rets'elisitsoe Matlanyaane, the Minister of Finance and Development Planning. Headlines have been swirling around her for weeks, igniting fierce debates among civil society and government officials alike. While she was reportedly attending high-level conferences in New York alongside the Prime Minister and other cabinet ministers, her absence was felt at home—loud and clear. Ironically, amidst her physical absence, news channels featured her prominently, overshadowing the ministers who were actually present at these events. While the headlines painted a rosy picture for her ministry, the tone was anything but uplifting: allegations of corruption and misconduct were aplenty. First, the Minister has been accused of sitting on the 2022/23 audit report for

OPINION

A Minister With No Ministerial Morals: A Call for Accountability and Change



the consolidated financial statement—delaying its release for months. What could be her motive? Many suspect she intends to share this troubling report with her cabinet allies first, allowing to them to prepare their defences against potentially damning revelations of corruption and fraud before they reach the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). Just when we thought the drama couldn't escalate further, another scandal emerged. The Minister allegedly meddled in the operations of the Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL), overstepping her bounds and undermining the authority's independence. Reports indicate that she even pressured tax officials to issue inappropriate directives and demanded sensitive taxpayer informa-

tion, favouring delinquent companies that owe millions in taxes. Where has the promise of a government that respects financial independence gone? What about the commitment to eradicate corruption within our ranks? It seems the rhetoric of anti-corruption is quickly losing its credibility when those preaching it are often embroiled in scandals themselves. One has to wonder if we are experiencing a classic case of "once you go black, there's no going back." It's worth remembering that this same minister was previously ridiculed by an opposition MP for her past as a chief advisor at the Central Bank—a role that many believe heavily contributed to the very issues current government supporters now criticise in previous administrations. As she would attempt to

highlight the shortcomings of her predecessors, the irony is now glaring: she finds herself entangled in similar misdeeds, undermining independent financial institutions and tarnishing her own reputation with questionable actions. It appears true that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree of "the corrupt system" that former administrations are often labelled with. With such alarming developments making headlines, international partners are right to scrutinise the integrity of those leading Lesotho. Investors, too, are left to question whether they should commit to a country whose finance minister seems to operate without restraint. Not too long ago, Lesotho proudly celebrated its removal from the SADC agenda, yet how can we continue to bask in this achievement while a minister in such a pivotal position faces severe scrutiny? Our government must engage in a deep, honest reflection. This administration was once a beacon of hope for Basotho, yet that hope dimmed with every troubling revelation about its questionable practices. However, if this serves as a stepping stone toward a transformed Lesotho, then perhaps we should dust off our defence caps and prepare for a reckoning—after all, previous administrations were hardly any paragons of virtue either. No matter the truth of the matter, the time for accountability and change is now.

SADC Plans to Make Water Centre of Corridor-led Investments

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The 11th SADC Multi-Stakeholder Water Dialogue held in Maseru this week focused on the critical role of water security in transforming Southern Africa's economic development corridors.

Themed "Water Security, Innovation and Nexus Action: Watering and Enabling Regional Economic Development Corridors for Transformation in SADC", the biennial event served as a vital platform for exchanging ideas, brainstorming pressing issues and shaping regional programmes to support integration, industrialisation and poverty reduction.

It aligned key regional and continental frameworks, including SADC Vision 2050, the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2020-2030), the SADC Regional Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap (2015-2063) and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

It also emphasised the exploration of how the water sector, under the Water, Energy, Food and Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus framework, can effectively contribute



to the newly endorsed regional initiative of smart regional economic corridors.

Mohlomi Moleko, Minister of Natural Resources, speaking at the event, emphasised the critical role of water in regional integration, economic development and industrial transformation within the SADC.

He said water is highlighted as essential to every link in the regional value chain,

from agriculture and energy to trade and industrial processing, emphasising that without water, there can be no inclusive growth or sustainable industrial transformation.

Moleko appealed that the SADC region's approach to economic corridor development must prioritise water at the heart of planning and investment to ensure that the corridors serve as lifelines of resilience, providing

equitable access to resources.

He highlighted the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and the Lesotho Botswana Water Transfer Project as demonstrations that value collaboration in managing shared resources for mutual benefit.

The SADC Secretariat Director of Infrastructure, Mapolao Mokoena, said they view economic corridor development

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as crucial for realising regional integration and development; therefore, the initiative seeks to align sectoral visions and strategies, co-design sustainable solutions, and promote impactful regional trade with seamless movement of goods, services and people.

Among many things, she highlighted challenges that remain outstanding in the water and energy sector, saying despite efforts, regional water access still stands at 63 percent and sanitation at 37 percent, falling short of the 80 percent target by 2030.

She encouraged adaptation of strategies to support regional progress in the water sector, adding that by recognising the limitations of working in isolation, the dialogue emphasises the pursuit of integrated arrangements and mainstreaming of cross-cutting sectors. The GWPSA Interim Executive Secretary, Andrew Takawira, also added a heavy voice to the dialogue, emphasising the need to move beyond conversation and towards concrete action in integrating water management into regional development strategies. Takawira told participants at the dialogue that Southern African economies are currently facing increasing pressure from climate variability, water scarcity and growing demands on food and



energy systems.

At the same time, the region is pursuing ambitious goals for industrialisation, agricultural transformation and energy transition, thereby placing the core challenge of the dialogue as a need to reconcile these pressures and ambitions in a way that will ensure resilience, prosperity and inclusion.

According to Takawira, without reliable and resilient water systems, development corridors cannot function as engines of transformation. He threw the question of how water security can enable the transformation of Southern Africa's economic development corridors to the participants. Member states participating in the dialogue acknowledged challenges, including climate variability, water scarcity and the fact that investments in corridors often fail to adequately integrate water management.

The two-day-long dialogue focused on three key areas:

1. Repositioning the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus: Integrating these elements into corridor planning to maximise synergies and manage trade-offs.
2. Unpacking the Role of River Basin Organisations (RBOs) and Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs): Strengthening the links between these institutions and corridor planning and governance to ensure development corridors are ecologically and socially sustainable.
3. Promoting Water-Smart and Climate-Resilient Investments: Showcasing innovative solutions and mobilising financing through blended approaches involving public budgets, public-private partnerships, climate funds and private capital.

The need to ensure that corridor-led investments systematically integrate

water security, making them resilient to climate risks and able to deliver sustained competitiveness, was another issue that was highly emphasised, including strengthening the links between transboundary institutions and development corridors, recognising these institutions as central actors in planning and implementation. At the end of the day, one thing was agreed upon: to leave Lesotho with a commitment to turn dialogue into delivery- to translate dialogue into tangible action. In Takawira's words, "Water is not a backdrop to development. It is the enabler. If we succeed in making water central to corridor-led investments, and if we connect our transboundary institutions to these engines of growth, then we will not only safeguard our future but also accelerate the transformation of Southern Africa and contribute to Africa's continental integration."

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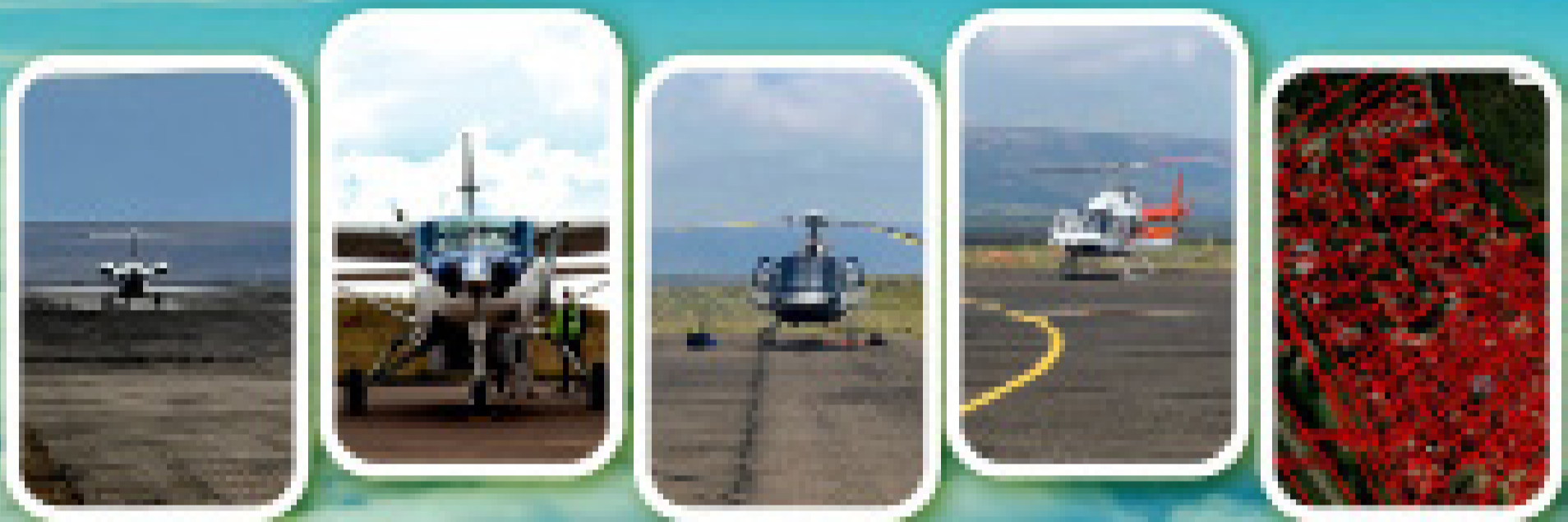


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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

FAO

Amidst craggy peaks and rolling highland plateaus characteristic of the Lesotho's terrain, there is a remote town in the mountains of Maseru District where Mabitsoane Diholo goes every day to work on her farm. The humble potato is her main crop, but humble no longer describes its place in her life.

"This potato has built my house. It has educated my children," says Mabitsoane, the 53-year-old farmer and mother of seven. "I used to grow potatoes just to eat at home and feed my children. Now, it is my livelihood."

Once grown mainly for family consumption, the potato is now a symbol of national transformation. Choosing this tuber as its priority product, Lesotho joined the

FARMERS CORNER

Lesotho's potato priority

TURNING THE POTATO'S COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL INTO REALITY REQUIRES INVESTMENT, MARKETS AND INNOVATION— FOCUS AREAS OF FAO'S OCOP INITIATIVE. ©FAO/ CARL HOUSTON MCMILLAN



One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2022. Mabitsoane is one of 750 farmers who FAO supported through this initiative. A lead farmer and active member of the Potato Lesotho Association, she also runs a roadside eatery and mentors others in her

community.

Whereas she used to sell whatever potatoes she had leftover by the road, with her increased volume thanks in part to seeds and fertilizers provided by FAO, she now sells to Maluti Fresh Produce Market in Maseru. A primary activity of the OCOP project is to connect farmers to local markets to stabilize and increase their in-

come from these priority crops.

Maluti Fresh Produce Market manager, Thabo Khalema says, "This market is pivotal in Lesotho's horticulture industry." He continues, "It gives local farmers a path to commercial farming, with fair pricing, transparency and real income. They're no

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longer just producers — they're entrepreneurs." "I get paid twice a week. This has changed our lives," Mabitsoane comments. "Before, we sold by the roadside and got cheated. Now, people come back again and again because they know my potatoes are good." "In Lesotho, the potato was already widely grown," explains Nthimo Mokitinyane, FAO's OCOP Focal Point in Lesotho. "But what was missing was coordination. Now, with better seeds, improved practices and market access, farmers are moving from subsistence to commercial farming."

He points to productivity increases of up to 20 percent in pilot areas. With the training they received through the OCOP initiative, he states, "We're seeing farmers make decisions based on data — about what to plant, when and how to market it. It's no longer guesswork — it's business."

Women at the forefront
More than 60 percent of OCOP-supported farmers are women. "They are the first to show up, to try new practices and to share knowledge," Mokitinyane says. "I'm not working for myself only," Mabitsoane says. "I'm working to uplift my fellow women. This project is giving us power to take care of our families." This sense of empow-

erment resonates with Maleuta Mahao, a 27-year-old who started farming just two years ago. "I used to think farming was just digging," she says. "Now I know it's business — about profit, planning and feeding the nation." Maleuta began with just 25 kilograms of seed and recently harvested over 300 kilograms of potatoes. She says that the OCOP project helped her believe in herself. "I want to be a big farmer and inspire others. People in the village ask me, 'How did you do it?' I tell them: 'start small, work hard and keep going'."

"Women have been at the forefront of agricultural production for decades," explains His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho, an FAO Special Goodwill Ambassador for Nutrition. "If we unlock the commercial potential of the potato, it can empower rural women and attract young people struggling to find jobs."

Transforming farming into business
Lesotho's high-altitude climate offers ideal conditions for potato farming, and the crop is central to the country's strategy for food security and economic resilience. But turning potential into reality requires investment, markets and innovation.

"Farmers need to know their produce will sell and generate income to reinvest in farming,"

King Letsie III.

Kutloelo Kothoelo Molapo, Project Coordinator of the Potato Lesotho Association, says OCOP has redefined how farmers operate. "Our members used to be subsistence growers," she explains. "Now they're talking about contracts, quality standards and profit margins. The mindset has changed."

The Association now works closely with farmers to meet market demands — from consistent supply to post-harvest handling. "Buyers want clean, sorted potatoes with no rot. Our farmers are delivering that," Molapo says. This growing commercial awareness is critical. According to Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, "OCOP is a game-changer. We used to rely heavily on imports... Now, with this initiative, we're building local capacity to produce more."

Mofosi says the goal is not just food security but economic transformation. "We are supporting the entire value chain — production, processing, transport and markets. That means jobs, income and dignity."

Maleuta is already dreaming big. "I want to grow for the whole country — not just for my village," she says. "I want to build something lasting."

For the more expe-

rienced Mabitsoane, farming has also become a means to invest in education. Her daughter is now at university, inspired by her mother's journey. "She wants to be like me," Mabitsoane says proudly. "A businesswoman."

This transformation — from subsistence to entrepreneurship — is what OCOP enables. "I have high hopes for the children of farming communities," says King Letsie III. "My biggest hope is that they grow as healthy citizens, nourished by nutritious foods produced in rural areas, enabling them to be productive adults."

FAO's OCOP initiative works by helping countries focus on one strategic crop and strengthen its full value chain — from seeds to sales. For Lesotho, the potato is no longer just a staple. It's a catalyst — for women's empowerment, youth employment and a more resilient rural future.

Every 16 October - World Food Day - is a chance to celebrate food heroes around the world. From farmers and fishers to innovators and chefs, food heroes are leading local and global efforts to create more sustainable and resilient agrifood systems. But we can all be food heroes: respect food, eliminate waste, reduce unnecessary consumption. Our actions are our future. Let's build a better one together.



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Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

Maseru

Lesotho – From October 1st to 4th, 2025, the Lesotho National Olympic Committee (LNOC) successfully hosted the third edition of the Maseru National Youth Games, bringing together young athletes from across the nation and beyond for a celebration of sport, talent, and unity. Taking place across venues in Maseru and Mafeteng, the Games showcased the LNOC's continued commitment to nurturing young talent and elevating the standard of sport in Lesotho.

This year's Games were the largest to date, featuring 15 sporting disciplines for athletes aged 14 to 19 years old. The sporting codes included: athletics, swimming, boxing, chess, cricket, cycling, mountain biking, rowing, women's rugby, table tennis, taek-

ARTS & SPORTS

LNOC Hosts 3rd Edition of Maseru National Youth Games with Growing Success



wondo, tennis, beach volleyball, baseball, badminton, and judo. This marks a significant expansion from the inaugural edition, which began with just nine codes, growing to twelve in the second edition, and now reaching its current peak.

LNOC Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Marake Raleaka, emphasized the Games' role in preparing young athletes for international competitions. "These Games bring youth together to prepare themselves for competitions outside the country, where they will be staying in one place and interacting with athletes from different nations," he stated. To replicate the experience of global tournaments, all participating athletes were housed together at the Police Training College (PTC) throughout the duration of the Games.

Aligning with the LNOC's Strategic Plan, the 3rd Ma-

seru National Youth Games continue to grow in both stature and scale, further establishing themselves as a cornerstone of Lesotho's youth sports development. The Games serve not only as a national celebration of youth sport but also as a key talent identification platform for national federations. Promising athletes identified during the event may be recommended for development at national or even international sporting bodies.

The event's growing reputa-

tion also drew regional interest, with representatives from Eswatini attending for the second consecutive time. Their presence underscores Lesotho's rising profile in the organization of youth competitions, offering a model that neighbouring countries are eager to learn from.

To ensure high standards and a competitive environment, the LNOC allocated an estimated budget of M700,000 towards this year's Games. This investment facilitated the delivery of top-notch sports equipment, further enhancing the quality and experience of the competition.

As the LNOC continues to invest in youth development, the Maseru National Youth Games stand as a powerful symbol of progress in Lesotho's sporting landscape, fostering future athletes and champions while promoting unity, discipline, and international readiness among the country's young athletes.



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